

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Taft Archaeological Site
other names/site number: 44FX0544

2. Location

street & number 7301 High Point Road not for publication

city or town Lorton vicinity
state Virginia code VA county Fairfax code _____ Zip 22079

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this _____ nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _____ nationally _____ statewide X locally. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official _____ Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

_____ entered in the National Register

_____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined eligible for the

National Register

Signature of Keeper

_____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined not eligible for the National Register

Date of Action

_____ removed from the National Register

_____ other (explain): _____

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name of property

location

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

☐ private
☐ public-local
☒ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

☐ building(s)
☐ district
☒ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Domestic</u>	Sub: <u>Camp</u>
<u>Industry/Processing/Extraction</u>	<u>Shell Midden</u>

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Landscape</u>	Sub: <u>Park</u>
	<u>Forest</u>
<u>Recreation & Culture</u>	<u>Outdoor Recreation</u>

7. Description**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)foundation

roof

walls

other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)**8. Statement of Significance****Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☒ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)Archaeology-Prehistory

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Servicename of property
locationPeriod of Significance Middle Woodland
Late WoodlandSignificant Dates ca. 500 B.C. – A.D. 900
ca. A.D. 900-1600

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation Native American

Architect/Builder _____

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: Archaeological Services, Fairfax County Park Authority**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property 0.7

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 18 309,028 4,279,893 (NW) 2 18 309,048 4,279,893 (NE)

3 18 309,005 4,279,856 (SW) 4 18 309,038 4,279,847 (SE)

☐ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

name of property
location

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: _____ Mike Johnson

Organization: Archaeological Services, Fairfax County Park Authority date 1 April 2004

street & number: 2739 West Ox Road telephone (703) 787-3778

city or town Herndon state VA zip code 20171

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Mason Neck State Park

street & number 7301 High Point Road telephone (703) 550-0960

city or town Lorton state VA zip code 22079

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Summary Description:

7. Description

Summary Paragraph

The Taft Archeological Site (44FX544) is a multi-component, stratified, upland, prehistoric and possibly proto-historic (Dogue) Native American camp covering a 50x80-meter area and dating to between ca. 2000 B.C. and A.D. 1560. The undisturbed part of the site appears to encompass 10x20 meters. This well-preserved component is located on a dissected, Coastal Plain plateau "finger" on the south side of the confluence of the tidal Kanes Creek Estuary and Belmont Bay on Mason Neck in southern Fairfax County, Virginia. The site contains an intensive occupation midden on top of the plateau with eroded features and artifact material exposed on the plateau edges. The midden includes mussel and oyster shell piles and pits, hearths and individual pottery clusters in a shallow stratified context. The artifacts include stone, ceramic, shell, bone, and ethno-botanical items. Ornamental items include a gorget and five different kinds of beads.

Background

Excavations in 1987 at the Taft Archaeological Site (44FX544) were designed to recover features most immediately threatened by estuarine encroachment along the site's northern edge. The site was initially recognized from eroding shell features on the northward facing bank of the dissected plateau remnant, end of the finger ridge. Additionally, soil ph transect, from the excavated portions of the site along its northern boundary, southward along the spine of the ridge, indicated additional discrete shell concentrations extending beyond 25 meters south of the site's northern edge.

The site was excavated in three stages in May through August 1987. Initially, a crew under contract to the Commonwealth of Virginia excavated a shallow bank cut and began the initial excavation. Due to the site's richness, the Archeological Society of Virginia's field school was held at the site. It continued the excavation. Finally, volunteers from the Northern Virginia Chapter - Archeological Society of Virginia under

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direction of a staff archeologist from Fairfax County completed excavations, taking the open squares down into sterile sub-soil.

Method

Twenty-one 2x2-meter squares were laid out contiguously on the northern edge to ensure all portions of slump and at least one-meter of undisturbed site were investigated. Six complete and six fragmentary squares, encompassing only the first two meters of site south of the southern-most erosion were excavated. This was done in anticipation of future erosional destruction due to sea level rise.

Because of slumping, not all of the squares along the northern edge encompassed a full two meters of area. Squares were further sub-divided into 1x1-meter sub-squares to improve the quality of recovery. Squares were hand excavated in 5-centimeter arbitrary levels. Functional and chronological artifacts were mapped along with features. Soil was sifted through 1/4-inch hardware cloth and 25x25x5-centimeter soil flotation and soil samples were recovered from each 1x1-foot sub-square.

The finished bank cut provided the methodological base and parameters for the rest of the excavation. It revealed both fire cracked rock and shell features. Interestingly, the numerous, small, mussel shell middens at the top of the profile were not in pits but piles, thus changing the excavation approach.

All 1/4-inch dry screen residue was taken back to the lab to be water screened through 1/16-inch window screen to increase the small artifact recovery. This did result in recovery of one small shell bead. All bulk shell was retained. Shell hinges were counted and all shell weighed. All artifacts were catalogued in the Fairfax County Archeological system, labeled, bagged and boxed for storage.

Data

A total of 47,937 artifacts were catalogued from the excavation. That included 19,680 stone, 3,679 prehistoric ceramic, 7,132 faunal, 17,147 shell hinges, 3 floral and 296 historic artifacts.

Diagnostic artifacts included Late Archaic Holmes and Calvert points, Early-Middle Woodland Vernon points, Middle Woodland Selby Bay, Piscataway and Potts points, and one Late Woodland triangular point. Pottery included Early Woodland

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Marcey Creek and one possible Selden island sherds, Middle Woodland Popes Creek and Mockley sherds, Late Woodland Rappahannock and Potomac Creek sherds, and one Proto-Historic Camden Ware sherd. Ornamental items included one slate gorget with a zigzag pattern etched into one face, one carnivore canine tooth bead, one circular bone bead, one marginella shell bead, one very small square shell bead, and one large earthenware ceramic bead. A small number of refined red earthenware, possible pearlware and glass sherds also were recovered and could explain the Colono-ware sherd.

A total of 6823 vertebrate bones were recovered. As a whole, fish bones were most numerous (33.9%), followed respectively by indeterminable (31.4%), reptile (19.4%) and mammals (9.9%). Bird (0.5%) and amphibian (n=2) were minimally represented. Bone condition ranged between fair to poor.

Floral analysis was never fully completed. However, charred black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) and wild cherry/plum (*Prunus sp.*) were identified by an ethno-botanist. Nineteen macro-wood charcoal fragments were also examined. However, they were not identified. To date, none of the flotation has been sorted for analysis. However, great potential exist for floral analysis from the flotation samples due to the tremendous preservation at the site.

Thirty-seven prehistoric features were recovered. This is particularly impressive because of the small area excavated. Prehistoric feature types included: (1) intrusive pits, basins, etc.; (2) extrusive shell piles; (3) hearths with fire cracked rock; (4) greasy stains, and (5) discrete pot breaks.

Radio-carbon dates included AD 10 \pm 60 (BETA 61317) on a Mockley feature (oldest recorded Mockley date) and AD 1160 \pm 50 (BETA 46955), AD 1330 \pm 50 (BETA 46954), AD 1560 \pm 60 (CAMS 5662) on Potomac Creek features.

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8. Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

The Taft Archaeological Site (44FX544) is significant in that it can address important archaeological issues related to the evolution of small, micro-social unit base camps from pre-agricultural (Popes Creek), to transitional (Mockley), to agricultural (Potomac Creek) sites. The Taft Site meets Criterion D established by the National Register of Historic Places:

Criterion D. The site has yielded, or is likely to yield, information, important in history, namely

*The site contains well-preserved archaeological deposits that can provide significant new information on Native American lifeways during the Middle and Late Woodland periods.

*The site has implications for the evolution of climate-induced adaptation in the upper Potomac Estuary.

Background

The Taft Archaeological Site (44FX544) is a small, stratified site, containing excellent organic preservation from discrete features, rather than an intense shell midden or village. The site therefore can address important archaeological issues related to the evolution of small, micro-social unit base camps from pre-agricultural (Popes Creek), to transitional (Mockley), to agricultural (Potomac Creek) sites. Also, the Taft site has a high research potential to address questions related to the evolution of settlement pattern and social and political organization during the development from tribal to chiefdom societies in the estuarine coastal plain of Virginia.

While the site was at least visited by Marcey Creek peoples (ca. 1300-800 B.C.), based on recovery of four sherds of the diagnostic ware, intensive, seasonal use and reuse was established by the Pope's Creek era (ca. 500 B.C.-A.D. 200). This continued through the Mockley Phase (A.D. 0-900) and into

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the later centuries of Potomac Creek and Rappahannock ceramic-producing peoples (A.D. 1100-1600). There was no evidence at Taft for proto-or historic contact with Europeans, other than the single sherd of Camden Ware.

The series of different ceramic from the Taft site offers the opportunity to study the development of Native American wares in coastal Virginia. The radiocarbon date of A.D. 10 is one of the earliest dates in Virginia for Mockley ceramics. The date suggests that the shell-tempered Mockley overlaps in time with the earlier Popes Creek ceramics, a similar ware except for sand temper.

The lithic assemblage at the Taft site is sparse. This suggests that the site served as a food gathering and processing station, where the full complement of lithic tool assemblage was neither needed nor brought. The site was probably a place where marine-oriented foodstuffs—mammals, reptiles, plants, and shellfish—were seasonal exploited.

The presence of oyster and mussel shells (10-20%) in the midden, the darkness of the midden soil, when compared with the surrounding soil, and the presence of greasy stains demonstrate exceptional organic preservation. The presence of oyster shell in a prehistoric context this far up the Potomac River is unusual. Whether the mollusk of choice was a matter of human selection, or availability, is conjectural. Whether human predation or environmental condition (decreasing salinity in the upper Potomac) reduced the availability of oyster to the point that exploitive strategies switched to mussel is unknown.

The floral potential at the Taft site has yet to be realized but the presence of walnut and cherry/plum charcoal is indicative of a high ethno-botanical potential.

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Bibliography

- Johnson, Michael F.
1991 Middle and Late Woodland Settlement Systems in the interior Fall Zone of the Potomac Valley: Not a Live Oyster in Sight. North American Archeologist 12:29-60.
- Norton, Robert F. and Edith A. Baird
1994 The Taft Site: A Middle and Late Woodland Assemblage from the Virginia Coastal Plain. Archeology of Eastern North America 22:89-134.

Geographical Data: Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nomination encloses the 50 meter by 80 meter distribution of Native American artifacts located on a point of land directly overlooking Belmont Bay and the south bank of Kanes Creek.

Geographical Data: Verbal Boundary Description

The Taft Archaeological Site (44FX0544) is located on Mason Neck State Park on the southeastern shore of Belmont Bay. The site is fronted by a tidal mud and sand flat. Kanes Creek Estuary borders the site on the northeast. The site is on the end of a long, flat bluff-top/finger ridge about five meters above mean high tide.

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List of Illustrations

Illustration 1 of 6

Map plan of excavation.

Illustration 2 of 6

Completed bank cut, prior to unit excavation (looking southeast).

Illustration 3 of 6

Feature 3, a mussel shell concentration, is shown in the wall of the bank cut. (looking south)

Illustration 4 of 6

Projectile points from Stratum A. Level 1. All are made of quartz except top row (from left): #1 rhyolite, #4 quartzite, #5 slate.

Illustration 5 of 6

Rimsherds from Features 2A and 2B, Potomac Creek vessel #1.

Illustration 6 of 6

Top row, left to right: perforated tooth, ceramic bead, incised slate gorget fragment. Bottom row, left to right: three shell beads, worked turtle shell, and bone projectile point.